



NEWS



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AKUBRA JOINS OTHER AUSTRALIAN COMPANIES TO BREAK INTO THE CHINA MARKET

New markets are something Akubra is always looking for and while we sell some hats into China there is obviously an opportunity to grow that demand quite significantly.

However China can be a complex and sensitive market to break into and one that many Australian companies don't fully understand.

Help is needed if it is to be done properly and to that end Akubra has joined 64 other Australian companies in an initiative called the Export Growth China Program, being led by the NSW Business Chamber.

It is designed to help small and medium sized businesses navigate those complexities of the Chinese market.

Akubra has joined companies such as Ugg boots manufacturer Shearer's Ugg, the Tim Cahill backed VitaMan, Byron Bay Cookies, Norco and Key Sun which makes natural lollipops for children.

An Australian showroom has been established in Shanghai, managed by Xiadya Wei, to display the goods and services of the 65 companies and provide staff who can set up meetings with potential buyers and offer advice.

"This is just one of the differences we have come to understand," Andrew Angus, Akubra's General Manager-Sales and Marketing, said.

"In Australia we have representatives who call on customers.



TRY THIS FOR SIZE: Managing Director, Stephen Keir and Australian soccer legend Tim Cahill at the Australian showroom.

"In China the customer comes to the showroom."

In August Andrew and Akubra's Managing Director, Stephen Keir, spent a week at the Shanghai showroom meeting and training the staff that will be representing Akubra and came away excited about the opportunities ahead.

"We learned a lot about how to do business in China and the scale of the opportunities there," Andrew said.

"It is early days but the signs are promising and we have a lot of work ahead of us in developing our business in China."

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THE AKUBRA RANGE CONTINUES TO GROW

NEW PRODUCTS:

The Electric Blue Milan and the Cappello.



Akubra would like to announce two exciting new releases as we continue to grow our range. Please contact your local representative or head office if you require further information

Milan

A soft retro styled hat trimmed with a Buckram inner for comfort, 10mm fur felt band with Antique Brass Akubra Badge, a wide brim and a low open crown.

The Milan harks back to a carefree era and is available in Electric Blue, Burgundy, Bran, Sand and Black on indent only. Size range is Small, Medium, Large and Extra Large

Cappello

A new unisex style that looks good on both men and women. Available in Natural and with a cigar styled precrease, soft buckram inner and double edged brim to help hold its shape. The soft and supple Cappello is designed to go anywhere you want to go and look good at the other end.

Finished with 10mm felt band and classic Akubra Scroll badge, the Cappello is already turning heads. Natural is available from stock service as well as indent along with Granite Blue. Sizing is Small, Medium, Large and Extra Large.

NEW MARKETING CAMPAIGN IN THE LEAD UP TO CHRISTMAS

Akubra will again be looking to encourage hat sales with an extensive marketing campaign in the lead up to Christmas.

We have embarked on one of our largest television advertising campaigns this Christmas with more than 1200 television spots booked through Regional 7 Network, 7 TWO, 7 MATE, GO, GEM and Imparja television

We are setting the scene with NEW

A CHRISTMAS STORY: Cast and crew on set.

30 second and 15 second "Akubra Christmas" commercials which started going live on November 22 and which conclude on December 20.

The NEW 30 second Christmas commercial is being alternated with our current 30 second BRAND advertisement.

The setting for the NEW Christmas commercial is around a family that is decorating their Christmas tree.

The father and son come home from

shopping with their Akubra hats on. Meanwhile, mum and daughter are decorating the Christmas tree.

The daughter unpacks the Christmas star and unfortunately finds the star has been broken.

The son quickly works out the solution to this problem and he throws his Akubra Stockman on to the top of the Christmas tree.

The family all smile while the Dad places his Akubra Coolabah on his sons head and the voice over says "Australian made, Worn the World Over"

Australian Made, Quality and Family Owned will again be the theme of the message that will be delivered to audiences along the Eastern Coast, Central Australia and country regions of Western Australia, South Australia and Tasmania.

The Christmas campaign is designed to target both our loyal current demographic as well as new adopters to the brand.

We look forward to the uplift in awareness of the Akubra brand and in turn the increase in sales through our retail network.



CHRISTMAS MESSAGE FROM THE MANAGING DIRECTOR



It seems like I was only writing to you just a month ago. I am pleased to say that this has been a very busy six months for Akubra with domestic retail sales very strong.

I hope this is the case for your business as well. Many of you would have heard the news that we recently closed a small division of our business.

Unfortunately the press distorted this story significantly, suggesting that Akubra was moving off shore, that our Hats were no longer Australian made and that this decision was made in the interests of financial gain.

Nothing could be further from the truth. The reality is that since the release of the calicivirus in Australia more than 20 years ago our domestic supply of raw materials has continued to diminish. At the time we made the decision to close the division less than 10% of our annual requirement was supplied from local sources.

Stringent quarantine rules were also impacting on our ability to import skins from Europe (not China as some have suggested).

The Board made a decision in the interest of protecting Australian jobs to stop our fur cutting process and instead import the raw material from Europe.

This resulted in the net loss of approximately four jobs with many of those accepting a voluntary redundancy. Other staff have been relocated to other parts of our operation and I am pleased to say that we recently added six new staff to our operation to train in the art of hat making.

My family and the Board of Directors are committed to manufacturing in Australia. Our product remains Australian Made and Akubra today is in its fifth generation of family ownership.

I would ask that when customers query you on Akubra you remind them of my family's commitment to the now 90 staff we employ in Kempsey.

I wish you all a safe and prosperous Christmas.
Stephen Keir

THE ROUND ABOUT STORY OF JILL AND GREG AND A CORAL AKUBRA

Jill and Greg Ross had lengthy careers in business and thought they were financially secure in semi-retirement until the flood that hit Brisbane in 2011.

"We had water up the ceiling of our house, it cost us a lot of money and we had to go back to work," Jill said.

"Greg and I had always wanted to do something different and we had never seen the outback so we decided to look for work in an outback pub.

"Basically, all we wanted to do was pour beer and make coffee.

"We tried Birdsville and there was nothing there but eventually we ended up in the Innamincka Hotel.

"Two months later the manager left and we ended up managing it for three years.

"We were also the Akubra agents and sold a lot of hats."

One hat they sold to themselves was this coral number which



PERFECT FIT: Rocky settles into his coral Akubra.

they gave to their daughter Jessica.

And Jessica has found it suits her six month old Chihuahua called Rocky just perfectly.

Jill and Greg are now back in Brisbane, have bought a house way out of the reach of any flood and have no desire to go back to pub work.

"It was a great experience and we met some wonderful people and saw a lot of the outback but we are well settled back in Brisbane," Jill said.

RYEBUCKS IS NOW IN MELBOURNE AS WELL

One thing became clear to John Austin, his wife Libby and their daughters Bianca and Jacinta after they opened Ryebucks at Ballarat four years ago.

An increasing number of customers were coming from Melbourne to buy western style gear including the more western style Akubra range of hats.

Earlier this year the family made a decision.

Instead of the customers coming to Ballarat they would go to the customers and open a second Ryebucks in Melbourne.

They found just the shop they wanted in the heart of the city, a corner site on Flinders Lane, only 100 metres from Federation Square, close to Swanston Street and with an enormous amount of potential passing trade.

John and the family including Jacinta's partner Dean Geddes, who fortuitously is a builder, gutted then refurbished and fitted out the store.

They retained the traditional country theme of their Ballarat store with the use of corrugated iron and polished red gum and the result is an eye opener.

Display cabinets and seating were built on site and for a

final touch Dean turned up with an enormous steel ball he had made from horse shoes.

He put a light inside, screwed the "sculpture" to the ceiling right in the middle of the shop and it has become a real talking point.

"I built a lot of machinery sheds in my time so with those skills and Dean's obvious building skills and the girls' enthusiasm and care as painters we produced something we are really proud of," John said.

"While Bianca and Jacinta manage the stores we also employ five girls led by Hayley Wright and we staff both the Ballarat and Melbourne shops on a roster basis.

"The Melbourne store is selling solely western style clothing with the Akubra display the eye catching centre piece.

"It is situated in the shop window and because we are carrying a huge range of Akubra hats it can't help but catch people's attention.

"We are carrying many of the styles that other shops don't stock and it has already paid dividends.

"Our sales in the first few months have gone beyond our expectations and we are confident it will continue that way."



The impressive Akubra display in Ryebucks new Melbourne store.

TRACEY AND ROCKY RETURN TO THEIR CHILDHOOD HOTEL

Tracey Hotchin and her sister Rocky spent the first 18 years of their lives living at Tibooburra's Two Storey Hotel which was owned and run by their late grandfather, Bill Kennewell.

He died many years ago and the pub changed hands several times, Tracey married station owner Craig and they had two daughters and are now grandparents.

The hotel always remained dear to Tracey and Rocky and last September they, along with Craig, bought the hotel.

They have since embarked on a massive renovation and upgrade of both levels and restoration of its famed balcony.

"Granddad had three daughters and mum was one of them and we all lived at the pub and the family helped run it," Tracey said.

"This is the first time Rocky and I have owned and run a hotel but we know every inch of this one, we had a pretty good grounding and we have strong ties to it.

"We are putting a lot of love, money and hard work into getting it back to the way it was when granddad had it."

That has included a complete refurbishment of the second floor accommodation, from new carpet to new furniture and beds and linen.

One of the features of the hotel is its gallery of old, worn out Akubra hats.

Ironically the hotel is also the Akubra



HORSING AROUND: Just another day at Tibooburra's Two Storey Hotel.

agency for this far flung corner of north western NSW.

"We want to push that part of our business when we get all the renovations finished," Tracey said.

When workers from the stations buy a new hat they leave the old one behind, on a hook on the wall.

Many of those owners have since died while others keep buying new ones and adding to the collection.

However there is one vacant spot on the wall reserved for the hat of 90 year old Bernard "Barney" Davey, a close family friend.

He owned and ran Tibooburra's second pub, the Family Hotel and he and Bill Kennewell were good mates.

"He is a lovely gentleman and I have told Barney we do not want to have to hang his hat for many years yet," Tracey said.

"But when we have to there is a special spot reserved for it."

Locals at the hotel are always ready for the unexpected and no one was surprised when Mick Batchelor called in after the New Year's Eve rodeo for a thirst quencher.

Mick goes to Tibooburra every year to help at the rodeo as one of the two pick up men and his horse is so quiet he had thought it easier to ride in rather than get out of the saddle and walk in.

Tibooburra is proud of its horsemen and Mick was joined on this particular day by locals Tony Caldwell, the 2013 saddle bronc champion and Fred Osman, last year's Australian bare back champion.

WE ARE TAKING A BREAK



Please note that the last day for the factory and the office will be Wednesday December 23. We will be unable to guarantee the fulfilment of stock orders received after Friday December 18 – and of course subject to stock availability.

The office will re-open on Monday, January 4 and there will also be a limited stock service at that time (generally only smaller orders). The factory returns to production on Monday, January 18 2016.

